

TEXAS STATE TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE AT BRECKENRIDGE

## HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding educational institution in the 17th District of Texas. The Texas State Technical College campus in Breckenridge, Texas, provides top rate education to students from across Texas, the United States and the world.

On Tuesday, November 9, 1999, the campus celebrated its tenth anniversary. I offered a flag flown over the Capitol to commemorate this occasion and to show our dedication to the education to both past and future generations.

I would like to submit for the RECORD a copy of a resolution that I offered at this very special event.

It is my hope that this Nation and my home State of Texas will continue to honor institutions like Texas State Technical College that have dedicated themselves to providing the best possible education to its students.

## RESOLUTION

Whereas, On November 9, 1999, the Breckenridge Campus of Texas State Technical College will celebrate its tenth anniversary; and

Whereas, The Breckenridge campus serves as a vital component of the Texas State Technical College System, welcoming students from every walk of life; and

Whereas, T.S.T.C. has made an ongoing commitment to the future by providing a top rate education to students from across Texas, the United States and the world; and

Whereas, Today's celebration honors not only the service by the Breckenridge campus of T.S.T.C. during the last ten years, but its commitment to the future; and

Whereas, I present this flag flown over our nation's capitol on October 4, 1999, as symbol of our dedication to those past and future generations who have benefitted by the instruction and opportunities made available to them at the Breckenridge campus, be it

*Resolved*, That I, Charles W. Stenholm, as Congressman for the 17th District of Texas, do officially recognize and extend my best wishes on the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Breckenridge campus of T.S.T.C. and that an official copy of this resolution be presented to T.S.T.C. as an expression of my high regards for their efforts.

DEMOCRATIZATION AND HUMAN  
RIGHTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

## HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 10, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the House schedule did not permit consideration of my resolution, H. Con. Res. 204, which has been co-sponsored by Representative HOYER, Representative FORBES and Representative MCKINNEY. The resolution voices concern about serious violations of human rights and fundamental free-

doms in most states of Central Asia, in particular, substantial noncompliance with OSCE commitments on democratization and the holding of free and fair elections.

Among the countries of the former Soviet Union, only in Ukraine and Moldova have sitting presidents lost an election and peacefully left office. We will yet see what happens in Russia, where President Yeltsin has launched another war in Chechnya. It may be too much, given the historical differences between our respective societies, to hope the post-Soviet states could find among their political leaders a George Washington, who could have been king but chose not to be, and who chose to leave office after two terms. But it is not too much to hope that other post-Soviet leaders might emulate Ukraine's former President Leonid Kravchuk or Moldova's former President Mircea Snegur, not to mention Lithuania's Algirdas Brazauskas, who all allowed a peaceful transfer of power.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Central Asian leaders give every indication of intending to remain in office for life. Their desire for unlimited and permanent power means that they cannot implement all OSCE commitments on democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as doing so would create a level playing field for challengers and allow the media to shine the light on presidential misdeeds and high-level corruption. The result has been an entire region in the OSCE space where fundamental OSCE freedoms are ignored while leaders entrench themselves and their families in power and wealth.

To give credit where it is due, the situation is least bad in Kyrgyzstan. President Akaev, a physicist, is the only Central Asian leader who was not previously the head of his republic's Communist Party. One can actually meet members of parliament who strongly criticize President Akaev and the legislature itself is not a rubber stamp body. Moreover, print media—though under serious pressure from the executive branch—exhibit diversity of views and opposition parties function. Still, in 1995, two contenders in the presidential election were disqualified before the vote. Parliamentary and presidential elections are approaching in 2000. Kyrgyzstan's OSCE partners will be watching carefully to see whether they are free and fair.

Until the mid-1990s, Kazakhstan seemed a relatively reformist country, where various political parties could function and the media enjoyed some freedom. But President Nazarbaev dissolved two parliaments and singlemindedly sought to accumulate sole power. In the last few years, the regime has become ever more authoritarian. President Nazarbaev has concentrated all power in his hands, subordinating to himself all other branches and institutions of government. A constitutional amendment passed in October 1999 conveniently removed the age limit of 65 to be president. The OSCE judged last January's presidential elections, from which a leading opposition contender was barred as far short of OSCE standards. Last month's parliamentary election, according to the OSCE, was "severely marred by widespread, pervasive and illegal interference by executive authorities in the electoral process." In response, President Nazarbaev has attacked the OSCE, comparing it to the Soviet

Communist Party's Politburo for trying to "tell Kazakhstan what to do."

Tajikistan has suffered the saddest fate of all the Central Asian countries; a civil war that killed scores of thousands. In 1997, the warring sides finally ceased hostilities and reached agreement about power-sharing, which permitted a bit of hopefulness about prospects for normal development and democratization. It seems, however, that the accord will not ensure stability. Tajikistan's Central Election Commission refused to register two opposition candidates for the November 6 presidential election. The sole alternative candidate registered has refused to accept the results of the election, which, according to official figures, current President Emomaly Rakhmonov won with 97 percent of the vote, in a 98 percent turnout. Those numbers, Mr. Speaker, say it all. The OSCE properly declined to send observers.

Benighted Turkmenistan practically begs description. This country, which has been blessed with large quantities of natural gas, has a political system that combines the worst traits of Soviet communism with a personality cult seen today in countries like Iraq or North Korea. No dissidence of any kind is permitted and the population enjoys no human rights. While his impoverished people barely manage to get by, President Niyazov builds garish presidential palaces and monuments to himself. The only registered political party in Turkmenistan is the Democratic Party—headed by President Niyazov. In late October he said the people of his country would not be ready for the stresses and choices of a democratic society until 2010, adding that independent media are "disruptive." On December 12, Turkmenistan is holding parliamentary "elections," which the OSCE will not bother to observe.

Finally, we come to Uzbekistan. The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, held hearings on democratization and human rights in Uzbekistan on October 18. Despite the best efforts of Uzbekistan's Ambassador Safaev to convince us that democratization is proceeding apace in his country, the testimony of all the other witnesses confirmed the widely held view that after Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan is the most repressive country in Central Asia. No opposition political activity is allowed and media present only the government's point of view. Christian denominations have faced official harassment. Since 1997, a massive government campaign has been underway against independent Muslim believers. In February of this year, explosions rocked Tashkent, which the government described as an assassination attempt by Islamic radicals allied with an exiled opposition leader.

Apart from elections, a key indicator of progress towards democratization is the state of media freedom. On October 25–27, an International Conference on Mass Media in Central Asia took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Not surprisingly, Turkmenistan did not allow anyone to attend. The other participants adopted a declaration noting that democratization has slowed in almost all Central Asian states, while authoritarian regimes have grown stronger, limiting the scope for genuine media freedom as governments influence the media through economic means.

I strongly agree with these sentiments. The concentration of media outlets in pro-regime hands, the ongoing assault on independent and opposition media and the circumscription of the media's legally-sanctioned subject matter pose a great danger to the development of democracy in Central Asia. Official statistics about how many media outlets have been privatized cover up an alarming tendency towards government monopolization of information sources. This effectively makes it impossible for citizens to receive unbiased information, which is vital if people are to hold their governments accountable.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that in Central Asia, the overall level of democratization and human rights observance is poor. Central Asian leaders make decisions in a region far from Western Europe, close to China, Iran and Afghanistan, and they often assert that "human rights are only for the West" or the building democracy "takes time." But delaying steps towards democracy is very risky in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious region of Central Asia, where many people are highly educated and have expectations of faster change. If it does not come, tensions and conflicts could emerge that could endanger security for everyone.

To lessen these risks, continuous pressure will be needed on these countries to move faster on democracy. Even as the United States pursues other interests, we should give top priority to democracy and respect for human rights, or we may live to regret not doing so.

#### REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON YOUTH, THE READY ACT

**HON. SUE W. KELLY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 10, 1999*

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce the Reducing the Effects of Abuse and Domestic Violence on Youth Act—also known as the READY Act. I am joined in introducing this legislation by Representatives CONNIE MORELLA, NANCY JOHNSON, CAROLYN MALONEY and JUDY BIGGERT. The READY Act is a first step toward addressing the multiple needs of children who witness or experience domestic violence.

In the past year, much has been done to find the cause of violence by our children. Tragic events like the ones at Columbine and Jonesborough have highlighted the violence faced by our Nation's youth. Working groups and commissions have been created across the Nation to study the cause of violence in our schools. Speaker HASTERT has created a bipartisan working group in the House, of which I am a member, to look at several aspects of our society and to identify which may influence the violent trend we have witnessed in our youth during the last several years.

However, as we know from study, one of the primary influences on socialization is the family. Over 3 million children witness violence in their own homes. It is here that my legislative focuses.

Witnessing domestic violence has a devastating impact on children, placing them at

high risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide. These children also may exhibit more aggressive, anti-social, fearful and inhibited behaviors. It is estimated that between 20 and 40 percent of chronically violent children have witnessed extreme parental conflict. Another study found that boys who had witnessed their father battering their mother had a 1,000 percent higher battering rate than boys who did not.

Clearly, witnessing this type of violence in the home has a profound effect on children. In order to combat this trend, the READY Act gives grants to qualified nonprofit agencies in order to create multi-level interventions for child witnesses. This program would create a partnership between entities like the courts, schools, health care providers, child protective services and battered women's programs to provide a system of cooperation and collaboration between the professionals in a community in order to better support these child witnesses.

Examples of intervention partnerships could include: security for the child and his or her family; mental health treatment; counseling and advocacy for the family; and outreach and training to community professionals. While many facets of this support system are currently in place, there is a gap in coordination and cooperation.

In another step to encourage coordination between various agencies, a second provision in the READY Act would encourage collaborative efforts between nonprofit domestic violence community agencies and schools to create a curriculum for K-12 students, as well as provide training for education professionals on experiencing and witnessing domestic violence. Training would include teachers, administrators, counselors and other school personnel. I believe that this provision is especially important in light of the determination that one-third of all 16-19 year old girls experience violence from an intimate partner.

Domestic violence often escalates during separation and divorce, and visitation is often used as an opportunity for abuse. Under my legislation grants would be provided to qualified applicants on a competitive basis to create family visitation or visitation exchange centers. Use of such centers will minimize the potentially dangerous interactions between family members.

On July 3, 1996, 5-year-old Brandon and 4-year-old Alex were murdered by their father during an unsupervised visit. Their mother Angela was separated from Kurt Frank, the children's father. During her marriage, Angela was physically and emotionally abused by Frank. Brandon was once hit by his father and had his lip split when he stepped in front of his mother during a domestic violence incident. Angela had an Order of Protection against Frank, but her request for her husband to receive only supervised visits was dismissed during custody hearings. Kurt Frank murdered his two sons during an unsupervised visit. While it is too late for Brandon and Alex, a secure visitation center will help to prevent other children from meeting the same fate.

The READY Act also allows the use of private pensions to settle child abuse judgments. Private pensions are currently used for alimony or child support payments, however

cannot be used to settle a child abuse judgment. This provision was originally submitted by my friend and colleague, CAROLYN MALONEY during the 105th Congress and I am happy to be able to include it in the READY Act. In addition, my legislation amends the Parental Kidnaping Prevention Act to provide a defense to women who flee across State lines to escape domestic violence or sexual assault, and ensures that a civil court can consider domestic violence and the parent and child's safety when determining which State should hear a custody dispute. This will pull the State and Federal laws regulating this area closer into line.

Finally, the READY Act includes a sense of the Congress stating that when determining child custody, it is not in the best interest of the child to force joint custody in cases where there is a history of domestic violence. This act also states, that it is also not in the best interest of the child to make so called "friendly parent" provisions a factor when there is abuse against a parent or a child. It is important for Congress to take the lead on this important issue.

In preparing to introduce this bill, I came upon a website that posted story after story from women who had been victims of domestic abuse. Of the dozens of stories that I read, one particular submission was especially poignant, by a 23-year-old woman named Lisa. Lisa had been married to her husband for 4 years, but altogether she has been with him for 6 years. He mentally and physically abused her and her children, just as her father had abused her and her mother. She is ready to leave him. She realized that her oldest child is 4 and, since he's a boy, she is afraid he will grow to be like her husband. Her youngest is 3 months, and she does not want her to end up where she is. Lisa ends her letter with the realization that she has to leave for the sake of her children. She writes of how she and her children have their whole lives ahead of them and it should not be a life full of fear.

Her letter was written over a month ago. Hopefully, since that time she has been able to flee her husband's abuse both to save herself and to save her children. Her lifetime has been testimony to the cycle of violence. For Lisa and her kids, it is time to break that cycle. While the road to healing begins with the knowledge that Lisa needs to save herself and her kids, more help is needed to repair the damage done during the years of abuse. Without it, chances are the cycle will continue.

As we all know, there are no easy answers or solutions to the violent acts of our youth. However, passage of the READY Act would be one solid step toward reducing the effects of abuse and domestic violence that is so clearly harming our youth.

#### TRIBUTE TO LA AGENCIA DE ORCI & ASOCIADOS

**HON. BRAD SHERMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 10, 1999*

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to pay tribute to La Agencia de Orci